



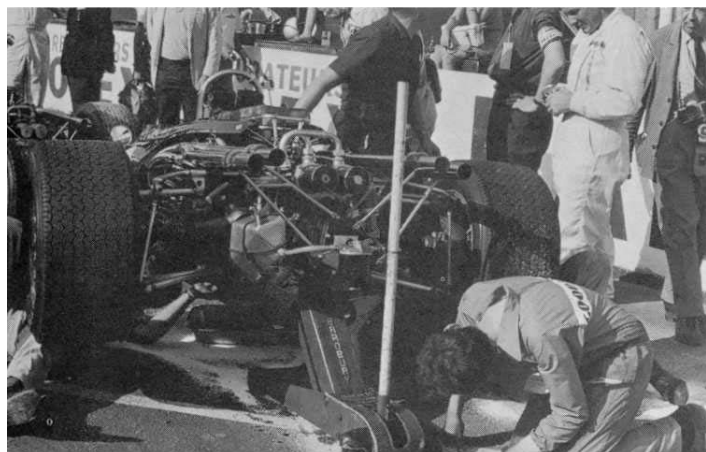
The president of the corporation ready to start work on behalf of the company.

**Story
and
Pictures
by
Denis
Jenkinson**

The All-American Eagle

A great many people in motor racing must have dreams of achieving an ambition, whether it be World Champion or an Ace designer, but few ever achieve their ambitions. Quite often this is due to a lack of money or suitable facilities, but this does not prevent them thinking about a project and making plans with the knowledge that "if only . . ." is the limiting factor. Some of these thoughts are simple, such as "if only I could drive like Fangio . . ." others are more complicated, such as "if only I had the resources of Ford. . . . One young man that came into motor racing with these sort of thoughts was Dan Gurney, the lanky lad who we know as a Californian. Gurney's real interest lay in European-type road racing and Grand Prix cars, and though he knew about U.S.A.C. track racing it did not appeal to him as much as road racing. His driving ability soon took him into the heart of European road-racing and in a very short time he was a member of the Ferrari Grand Prix team, and went from there to other factory teams like B.R.M., Porsche and Brabham, for Gurney the driver was sought after by everyone, his outstanding ability being easy to see. While he was driving for these teams he naturally met a lot of people and got to know numerous specialists in the Grand Prix field, and being a friendly lad, with a really serious mechanical interest in racing cars he struck up numerous long-standing friendships with mechanics, designers, accessory specialists

In practice there are always problems. Investigating an oil leak from the car McLaren drove at the French G.P.



and so on. Dan had one main ambition (and the ability to achieve it, unlike a lot of people) which was to win the Grand Prix drivers Championship, but he had other dreams as well, all centered around having his own Grand Prix team, but that ambition needed money, so it was put into the "if only . . ." category. It was not forgotten or abandoned, and perhaps sub-consciously, Dan gathered together little bits of information and made personal contacts that one day might come in useful. One day. . . . It was like "if only. . . ."

While Grand Prix racing was Dan's real love he did not turn his back on other types of racing, and took every opportunity that was offered, doing particularly well with the big "Stockers" and showed good promise at Indianapolis. His driving ability and enthusiasm for all forms of motor racing got him deeper and deeper into the racing world.

In 1963-64, unknown to Gurney at the time, his "if only . . ." and "one day . . ." dreams were overheard. The Goodyear Tyre and Rubber Company were tired of Firestone winning at Indianapolis year after year and decided to do something about it, but the question was "How," for Firestone had all the big teams contracted. As in everything in this world, it is not *what* you know but *who* you know, and the smallest acquaintance can inadvertently set the ball rolling. If it rolls your way you've got to be ready to catch it. Then, and then only comes the time for "what you know" to take precedence. If you drop the ball in the grass, that's it, you need not bother to pick



A bad moment for Gurney . . . he stops alongside the course in the Dutch G.P. and his mechanics and team manager try to get him going again, but the injection unit was at fault. Clark, Hulme and Amon pass by.

it up, but if you are ready and have the ability you can go places.

Goodyear were doing business and racing with Carroll Shelby at the time they decided to make a real attack on Indianapolis, and by this time Gurney had formed a small group to run sports cars in West Coast races, with himself as number one driver, and this little team was called All American Racers Incorporated. Shelby knew of this activity and was instrumental in bringing Gurney and Goodyear together in a big business deal, with the objective of winning Indianapolis. Gurney's "One day . . ." had arrived and he threw everything he had got into this opportunity. He persuaded Goodyear that he could not only have a go at Indianapolis, but with the same set up he could have a go at Grand Prix racing for them. By this time Colin Chapman and Lotus had transformed Indianapolis thinking, and U.S.A.C. cars and Grand Prix cars were very similar in design. When Chapman and Clark had first met Ford it was Gurney who introduced them.

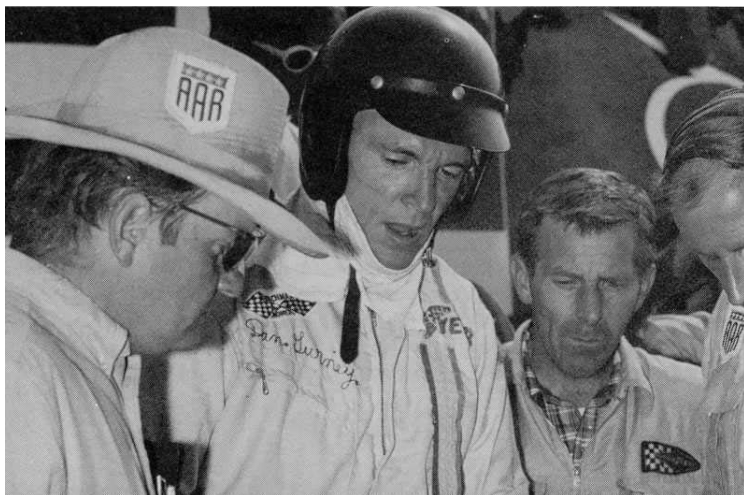
When Goodyear gave Gurney the "go" signal he pulled



Left to Right, Mike Lowman, Tim Wall and Dan Gurney pushing the Eagle-Weslake out to the start of the Belgium G.P. in 1967 which Gurney was to win.

out all the stops and all those contacts and friendships that he had built up over his years of Grand Prix racing all began to fall into place. During 1965, while he was still driving for the Brabham team, the real purpose of All American Racers Inc. took shape, and with the backing of Goodyear the Gurney "Eagle" was born. His association with Lotus had brought him into contact with Len Terry, who designed the Indianapolis Lotus and he soon had Terry working in California on a chassis that could be used for Indianapolis and U.S.A.C. racing using a Ford V8 engine, and also for Grand Prix racing, but there was no Ford Grand Prix engine available. However, in England there was a small firm of engine specialists run by Harry Weslake with whom Gurney was doing business on a project to extract more power from a Ford 289 pushrod engine, for use in sports car races. This contact with Weslake Engineering went back some years, for the chief designer was Aubrey Woods, whom Gurney had got to know well when they were both at B.R.M. When A.A.R. Inc. was being formed with its interest in big-engined sports car racing, Gurney could not help being impressed by the power being obtained by English engine specialists from tiny 1-litre Ford pushrod engines for use in Formula 3. He thought that if the English tuning know-how could be applied to a big Ford V8 power plant it could produce some interesting results, and through Aubrey Woods he met Harry Weslake and a great friendship was struck up, both having an inborn enthusiasm for engines and racing, as well as a similarity of character. While Weslake was working on the special cylinder for the 289 Ford engine the Good Fairy Goodyear came to Dan's life, and with the

Something must have gone wrong judging by the expression, left to right, Bill Dunne, Dan Gurney, Tim Wall and Mike Lowman.



blessing to go Grand Prix racing as well as U.S.A.C. racing and Weslake and his small team joined in with as much enthusiasm as Gurney and his group, for they too had had dreams of "one day . . ." and "if only . . ."

By Indianapolis 1966 the A.A.R. Eagle was not only very competitive but Lloyd Ruby was well in the lead at two-thirds distance when the Ford part of the project let him down. Gurney himself, was a hot favourite before the start, but was eliminated in the starting line multiple pile-up. While the Indy-Eagles were being hatched the Grand Prix Eagles were also in the nest, and Weslake and his men were at work on a V12 cylinder engine of 3-litres for the Grand Prix Formula that started in 1966. Len Terry had done a first class job on the universal chassis and it had proved outstanding at Indianapolis. As soon as the Weslake 12 cylinder engine was ready the Grand Prix Eagle chassis was ready to show its paces.

Designing and building a chassis is one thing, designing and building an engine is another, and more difficult and time consuming, so no one was too depressed when the 1966 began slipping by before the Grand Prix engine was running. With the Indianapolis Eagles well under control and race worthy, it was decided to run one of the Grand Prix Eagles with a 4 cylinder Coventry-Climax engine installed, for this way Gurney could achieve a number of useful objectives. He could develop the chassis in respect of road-holding and all it's vicissitudes, and he could get the name Eagle into the Grand Prix world.

The headquarters of All American Racers Inc. had been set up at Santa Ana in California, and from this factory the Indianapolis cars emanated, while the bare chassis structure of the Grand Prix cars were built there. There was no point in building the Weslake engines in England, shipping them to California to be installed in the cars, and then shipping them back to Europe to race them, so Gurney arranged to have a small assembly shop built behind the Weslake factory. This fitted in splendidly with Harry Weslake's ideas, for he had always dreamed of having an interest in a Grand Prix team and here was the opportunity to have one in his back yard. With European Grand Prix racing as the prime objective it was an ideal situation to have the Eagle team based on the south coast of England, a short ride from the ferry boat that connected England with the continent of Europe. In deference to the Weslake side of the Eagle Grand Prix car the English fac-

Waiting for Dan. He has lapped in 1 min. 26 sec. at Zandvoort in practice, but it is not quick enough for the Lotus has gone faster. Left to right, Bill Dunne looking sour, Joaquin Ramirez holding the board, with young Jesse Corke alongside, Mike Lowman looking pensive, Rouem Haffenden looking away and Denis Jenkinson and Harry Manney talking about something else.

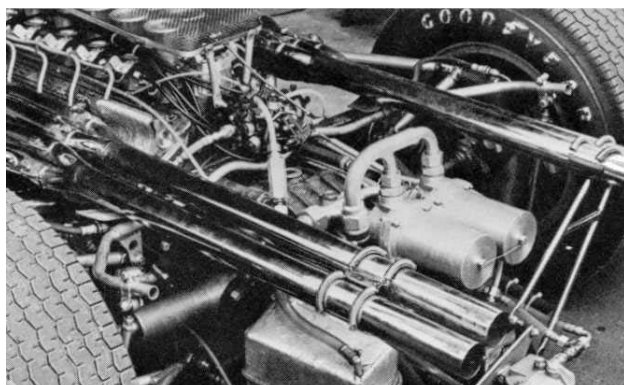


tory was titled Anglo-American Racers Inc., leaving the Santa Ana works as All-American Racers Inc. The Californian factory remained as the true headquarters of the over-all project and Gurney became a regular commuter between America and England.

In addition to attracting Len Terry from Lotus, Gurney also persuaded Tim Wall to join him as chief mechanic, Tim having been Gurney's mechanic when he was in the Brabham team. One of the most important assets of a good mechanic is that he should have faith, and believe in everything that his driver does, and on this score Tim is well ahead of most, for he is Gurney's greatest fan. To help him with the Grand Prix project Tim persuaded Mike Lawman to join him, Mike having had a lot of racing experience with various English teams, and Joaquin Ramirez joined them from the English Ford team. Two local lads from Rye, in Sussex, joined the staff, these being Rouem Hafenden and Jesse Corke, and these five became the assembly staff at Anglo-American Racers, Inc. on the Sussex coast. While in Mexico at the end of the 1965 racing season Gurney made it known that he was leaving Brabham and starting his own Grand Prix team and he talked Bill Dunne into joining him as Team Manager, while Bill's wife Caroline was also put on the staff as time-keeper and recorder (as well as tea-maker at the circuits!) so the Dunne family moved to England, living not far from the small A.A.R. factory. With the addition of a general secretary, an odd job man and a machine-shop operator Gurney had everything set for the 1966 season of Grand Prix racing, the "firm next door" working at high pressure on the new 12 cylinder engine.

Had things been sufficiently advanced A.A.R. were going to run two cars, with Jerry Grant driving the second one, but it was not until the season was nearly over that the 12 cylinder Weslake engine first ran, so Grant never got a drive in the G.P. car. It was at the Italian G.P. that the 3 litre Gurney-Weslake first appeared, by which time the name Eagle had become well respected, for Dan had proved on numerous occasions that the chassis was ready for racing against the best, by his performances using a 240 b.h.p. Coventry-Climax 4 cylinder engine. Although the Weslake engine was used a number of times in chassis 102, it suffered numerous small troubles and never really showed its true performance. However, during the winter of 1966/67 intensive development work got things well sorted out and two cars were made ready for the first Formula 1 event in 1967, at Brands Hatch. It was not a full-length Grand Prix, but it was a good opener for the season, and Gurney won this convincingly, the new engine producing well over 400 b.h.p. Having tried Phil Hill and Bob Bondurant in one of the Eagles, Gurney finally settled on Richie Ginther as his number two driver, but after the Monaco G.P. Ginther decided that a car as fast and power-

The business end of an Eagle showing the four tail pipes, the fuel pumps above the gearbox, the fuel tank alongside which acts as a header for the injection system.



ful as the Eagle-Weslake was more than he could really cope with, so he retired from racing. This left Dan on his own, and it says a great deal for the impression made by the A.A.R. Eagle in less than 12 months, that a number of top drivers showed an interest in being number two driver to Gurney. He finally decided to invite Bruce McLaren to join the team, and A.A.R. felt prepared to tackle all-comers in Grand Prix racing. After a fiddling trouble put Gurney out of the Dutch G.P. the team went to Belgium for the Grand Prix on the very fast Francorchamps circuit, with lap speeds of 145 m.p.h. The new Lotus 49 cars were dominating the scene, but Gurney and his Eagle-Weslake was right behind them and it became very clear that the Lotus and the Eagle were the only possible potential winners, and certainly the only ones with more than 400 b.h.p. coming from their engines. When his rivals ran into mechanical trouble Gurney took the lead and won his first Grand Prix event for the Anglo-American Racers Eagle.

While this was a fine achievement in itself it was doubly praise-worthy for it was at the Belgian G.P. exactly 12 months before that the first Grand Prix Eagle ran, using the old 4 cylinder Climax engine. A lot of teams with years of experience and almost unlimited resources have never equalled this feat, so that Dan Gurney and his small group of workers at Rye could feel justifiably proud of their efforts, for 12 months before they were taking part in their first race as a united group, and it was only just over 9 months since the Weslake engine ran for the first time.

At the other end of the Eagle project the Indianapolis efforts were nearly as successful, for seven Eagle cars were qualified for the 1964 start, some entered by A.A.R. and others by private owners. Once again Ford engines let them down, and when Gurney's engine broke he had been leading for a time. To win Indianapolis and a Grand Prix event in the same season would be asking too much, even for the ambitious Gurney, but nonetheless the name Eagle is now very respected in both types of racing, while the name of Dan Gurney has been respected for more years than one cares to remember.

Naturally, finance is not unlimited and firms such as Castrol and Yamaha have helped the team as well as Goodyear, but whoever supports Gurney and his Eagles are not likely to be disappointed for Dan goes motor racing to the limit every time he gets into a car, and though his staff is small it is 100% behind him and the preparation and turn-out of the A.A.R. Eagle team is admired by all who see it.

The story of Dan Gurney and his Eagle team is a bit like a fairy tale but no one begrudges him his Fairy Good-year, in fact it is gratifying that at no time has a word been heard against the project in Grand Prix circles, and "sour grapes" are a healthy commodity in motor racing. This reflects the high esteem in which the lanky American is held in World sporting circles, and when Car and Driver ran a campaign for "Gurney for President" they were not far out. It would be hard to find a better U.S.A. ambassador for meeting people from foreign lands.

Writing this at the height of the Grand Prix season, if I could have a wish granted by Fairy Goodyear, it would be for Dan Gurney to win the Grand Prix of the United States of America in one of his Eagle cars. I would enjoy it, all you spectators would enjoy it, and I know Dan Gurney would enjoy it. His little hard working group at Rye and "the firm next door" Harry Weslake and company would not say much, but I know they would all feel that it had all been more than worthwhile and there is no greater prize than satisfaction. "Gurney for President"